

USA TODAY
26 July 1983ARTICLE REPRODUCED
ON PAGE 1A

CENTRAL AMERICA

Reagan on TV tonight; Kissinger defines role

By Ann Devroy
and William Ringle
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — The Reagan administration moved Monday to try to quiet fears that the USA is headed for a Vietnam-like military involvement in Central America.

■ President Reagan scheduled a TV press conference for 8 p.m. today; aides said it will "clear up the confusion about what we're doing and what our plans are in Central America."

■ Former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger — whom many critics associate with the Vietnam War — said his chairmanship of an advisory commission on Central American policy is for a limited time and will not involve "operations."

■ The Defense Department tried to depict a five-month-long, two-ocean military exercise in Central America as planned and routine, not a prelude to military intervention — though the White House and Pentagon officials called it a "military shield" for the area.

The exercises will include up to 4,000 USA troops at a time and three naval task forces led by the carriers Ranger and Coral Sea and the battleship New Jersey.

■ The White House denied published reports that the Pentagon has asked to double the number of USA military advisers in the region, now 55.

■ Reagan met with members of Congress, downplaying military aspects of his policy.

But on Capitol Hill, Speaker Tip O'Neill, D-Mass., said reports of deepening involvement — including more military advisers — were "an unneeded show of strength" and "absolutely awful."

Rep. Tom Foley, D-Wash. said fears of increased military presence in the region may help Democrats trying to cut off \$80 million in aid to Nicaraguan rebels; the House is set to debate the aid issue today.

White House officials said even if the House votes a cut-off, they do not expect the Republican-controlled Senate to approve ending the covert aid.